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ABSTRACT

An analysis of the evaluation of partnership programs with a focus on accountability is the purpose of this paper. Research for the book, "Partnerships in Education: Measuring Their Success," entailed a survey of various partnership leaders from education, business, government, and nonprofit organizations. The survey results are discussed in this paper. The components of evaluation--target population needs, resource allocation, goal consensus, congruence between structure and goals, scope, goals and objectives, and measurement--are discussed. Although programs vary widely in content and format, they all must address the issue of accountability.
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SESSION: SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS: THE SECOND WAVE

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PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION: MEASURING THEIR SUCCESS

A. INTRODUCTION

The Partnerships in Education Movement is "growing up!"
With that growth has come successes, problems and different
expectations related to the future mission and purposes of
partnerships in education.

Over the past five years, formal partnership programs
have sprung up all over the United States. Based initially
on the adopt-a-school model, these programs now come in
different sizes and shapes (adopt-a-school, formal volunteer
programs, alliances, collaboratives, funds, compacts, etc.).

With over 140,800 partnerships counted (USD OE 1988),
more and more human, financial and in-kind resources are
being expended to support school, business and community
agendas. Therefore, these partnership programs have grown in
both breadth and depth.

The Business Viewpoint

Earlier in the movement, business interest in
partnerships lay primarily in community relations; currently,
the attention of business is focused on the broader issues
of: a) how to recruit and retain a qualified work force;
b) how to expand the pool of educated consumers; and c) how
to improve the social and economic conditions effecting the
quality of life within the larger community.

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And, business and the community and other organizations look upon partnerships in education as important and growing tools to address their interests and needs. They see partnerships as supplemental and supportive to school improvement efforts. The question is "will this interest hold?" We know that the private sector has significantly increased its support to public education. Will business continue to see the tool of partnership as important to meet its long-range needs? Or will business look elsewhere to fulfill these needs as some businesses are already doing... overseas .

The Community Viewpoint

Civic groups see partnerships as one tool to instill pride in their communities, to provide community service and to support a range of community efforts locally as well as regionally and nationally.

The Educator Viewpoint

Educators all over this country face similar serious problems with their student/client population. Goals of these educators, in general, fall into the following four areas: a) support to district-wide administrative and instructional goals and objectives (through garnering additional human, financial and in-kind resources); b) improvement of student achievement; c) reduction of student dropout rates; and d) improvement of overall district management.

B. CHANGING TIMES

But times are changing. Here are some realities that must be addressed. Many communities now struggle with the problem of how to coordinate programs and resources to assure the greatest outcomes vis-a-vis school reform efforts.

Resources for schools, whether they be traditional resources from local, state and federal government sources (both discretionary and non-discretionary), appear on a national trend to becoming more restricted, while costs for educating our youth are rising. And, as demands for school reform have increased, these demands are surpassing available major public funding. In addition, public educators face increasingly intense competition from other public sectors (law enforcement, fire prevention, drug abuse prevention and rehabilitation, the homeless, etc.) for a fair share of local and state resources. Private sector resources, while welcome and growing, can only supplement, not supplant these traditional sources of funding.

Educator leaders, businesses, government. foundations, associations, etc. are increasingly "bombarDED" with requests for resources of all kinds. The private sector is itself faced with increasingly limited resources due to factors such as rising labor and training costs, changes in governance structures (due to mergers and acquisitions) and fluctuating profits.

Faced with the prospect of burgeoning partnership programs with accompanying increased demands for assistance and support, public and private providers must make critical decisions regarding the use, distribution and management of available resources. These providers require "bottom line" information upon which to base these decisions. With reduced resources and growing requests, all partners in education are faced with decisions regarding the use, distribution and management of more limited resources for educationally-related programs and efforts. They must decide whether or not to: a) add new programs; b) replicate existing programs; c) extend a particular program; d) eliminate a program; e) consolidate a number of programs, etc.

How are they going to make these decisions? What will be the basis for this decision making? Partners need information upon which to base their decisions regarding the re-allocation or distribution of their financial, human and in-kind resources to support partnerships in education efforts. These partners are asking such questions as:

a) How resources have been, are being, or will be used by school and community partners;

b) has the expenditure of these resources been cost-effective? Have the energies involved in developing and managing these programs been worth the time expended? Are money and other resources given to these programs being distributed efficiently and effectively?

c) What impact these resources have had in relation to achieving partners' goals and objectives in terms of student improvement in achievement, attitudes and behaviors?

Therefore, partners want to know what happened and what was accomplished - not just in numbers (i.e., how many partners put in what kind of hours or what amount of monies were spent). Partners are interested in the quality of the effort: did attendance improve? Was substance abuse less prevalent? Did more students pass their courses? Were more students on time for class? Did students take more and more difficult science and math courses? Did less students drop out? Did more students pursue post-high school education and training? Were more teachers aware of current career opportunities for students and the accompanying skills necessary for their students to experience success in the world of work? Were the schools' partners (particularly business) more satisfied with graduates from high schools who entered their work force? Was less retraining necessary? Did graduates who went on to college or advanced technical training need less remediation?

What is clear is that the factor of "accountability" is now clearly before leaders from all constituencies and organizations. Those leading these collaborative programs will either confront the accountability factor or run and hide. Those who retreat face the strong possibility/reality that the partnerships in education movement will be likely to fade (as another fad) or at best revert to purely community

relations efforts. Schools will then have missed the opportunity to expand substantive support for school improvement. Meanwhile, business, government and civic/community partners will continue to face the problem of a growing mass of under-educated, dependent young adults who will be basically unfit (educationally, physically, emotionally and behaviorally) to assume a proactive, productive role in the world of work as well as within their communities.

C. FACING THE ISSUE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Now that schools and their partners have begun to really know and understand each other, they have become increasingly aware that no one organization alone can tackle the problems associated with school improvement. Accountability is a part of this picture that must be addressed collaboratively.

Parameters to Partnership Program Evaluation

Partnerships are supplemental programs. They support, they assist, they provide technical assistance, they lobby for and advocate for good schools. They cannot do it "all." And, they cannot supplant basic school efforts and functions.

So, when we talk about determining outcomes resulting from the use of education, business and community resources, that is, assessment of what happens as a result of support through partners' services, efforts and resources, we must remember that what is being assessed are non-traditional programs that support, guide and prod school reform efforts.

These programs are more often than not (although this is changing, too) ancillary rather than integral to the core life of a school. Moreover, there is limited precedent and experience for determining the success of partnership structures, activities, procedures and strategies.

And, until recently, partnerships lacked appropriate measurement systems and instruments. It is difficult enough to evaluate the outcomes of regular day-to day reading programs - and even then people argue over what test scores mean! It is much more difficult to assess the outcomes of these non traditional programs when so many other variables appear to intrude upon and detract from determined results.

As "evaluation" and "accountability" are increasingly thrust upon educators involved in school reform efforts, these words and their associated activities have overt negative connotations to educators. Pressures to complete yet another evaluation, and one assessing non-traditional programs that are supposed to be "fun," supplemental and enrichment, meet with a range of passive/aggressive behaviors from apathy to outright resistance.

Over the past five years, as formal partnership programs have mushroomed, program leaders have concentrated their efforts on program planning and development, recruitment and recognition of partners, establishing program structures, and implementing program activities. In most cases, accountability has not been requested - at least not immediately. When asked for evaluation, program leaders

provided primarily quantitative assessments, focused on documenting process, that is, "what happened" and "what was accomplished" (number of hours volunteers served; program monies spent; kinds of activities, and how activities were planned, implemented, and managed).

D. NEXT STEPS

Since accountability is a necessary and realistic component of partnerships today and in the future and because decisions need to be made by all partners about the amount, way in which, and kind of resources that can be distributed, partners are working to ensure that assessment will be used positively and productively to:

- a) assist program directors to efficiently plan, develop and manage their programs;
- b) help improve, refine and renew existing programs;
- c) encourage the extension and replication of exemplary programs;
- d) recruit new partner participation; and
- e) celebrate and recognize partners' and programs' success.

Leaders of successful partnership programs recognize that answers to these questions are based on formative and summative evaluations. In connection with the preparation and publishing of Partnerships in Education: Measuring their Success (InfoMedia Communications, 1990), a survey was sent to a range of partnership leaders from education, business, government and non-profit organizations to collect information about how they plan, implement and manage their programs' evaluation component. These leaders have wrestled with how to collect, organize, analyze and

report evaluation results; they currently use these results as the basis for programmatic decision making. Evaluation is used to determine the degree to which: a) programs meet the needs of youth and adult target populations; b) resources have been allocated efficiently and equitably; c) program goals and objectives complement and support those of teachers, schools and the school district at-large; d) partnership structures (adopt-a-school, alliances, volunteer programs, collaboratives, foundations, funds, etc.) facilitate the achievement of goals and objectives given the partnership's size and "make-up" (who belongs to the collaborative); e) the partnership's scope (local, regional, state and national) and service areas (rural, suburban and urban) are manageable and controllable; f) partnership goals and objectives are achieved; g) activities that are implemented support the achievement of goals and objectives; and h) the differing assessment procedures, strategies and instruments provide the depth and breadth of information about program processes and outcomes that enable leaders to make intelligent decisions;

The data that was gathered provides current "nuts and bolts" information related to how to measure the success of partnerships in education programs. The book provides the reader with:

- BASIC PROGRAM INFORMATION (program description; when program was initiated; program scope; areas served; number of sites; budget; kind of partners; target groups; program

goal/objective list; program activity list)

- INFORMATION REGARDING HOW PROGRAM LEADERS DETERMINED OVERALL PROGRAM RESULTS (how and when evaluation is conducted; percent of program's budget used for evaluation; who's responsible for evaluation; who receives reports; reporting formats and program processes and outcomes measured)

- A SECTION TITLED, "A CONTRIBUTION FROM...." asking respondents to take one objective that was measured and tell: activities that were chosen to achieve that objective; how they planned and organized the evaluation; how they used their evaluation strategies and instruments; what they saw as the value of the evaluation process for purposes of decision making; and, indeed what decisions did they make/or will they be making based on evaluation results.

E. ASSESSING PROCESS AND OUTCOME

Evaluation is a complex task for program leaders. Results received through the survey demonstrate that assessing process is relatively easy and straightforward. Processes most commonly measured (listed in order of frequency) include:

- the number, kind place and frequency of activities;
- the number and kind of resources provided;
- the kind and number of methods of instruction;
- the number, age and status of youth receiving services;
- the number and status of adults receiving services;

- the ease or difficulty of facilitating logistical arrangements; and
- the adequacy of resources provided, given the need.

However, even with the use of outside "expert" evaluation consultants, program leaders have had difficulty in clearly demonstrating and documenting outcomes of any kind whether they be programmatic, learner, management, and curriculum, etc. Outcomes that are most frequently measured (listed in order of frequency) include:

- increased oral and written language skills;
- improved basic skills;
- extended career awareness;
- increased ability to apply school learning to real life situations;
- increased technological skills;
- improved attendance;
- increased grade averages;
- increased participation in post- secondary academic and vocational programs; and
- improved staff morale.

It is difficult to measure outcomes that yield the necessary substantive data upon which to base decisions. Evaluators find themselves lacking precedent and experience when evaluating these non-traditional programs. This want of experience appears coupled with the absence of appropriate systems and instruments to use for implementing the evaluations. Other problems encountered during evaluation

concern educators resistance to evaluation; insufficient funding dedicated to evaluation; management styles for which evaluation is not a priority; apathy; and time constraints.

F. ESTABLISHING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Program leaders have also experienced difficulty in establishing expected program outcomes for the targeted population (students, adults, the school as a whole, etc.). They note that precise, quantifiable goal and objective setting can be hampered when, as often happens:

- partners set global goals and objectives that are not easily measured;
- goals and objectives are developed that are not well understood by participating partners;
- partners perceive such goal/objective setting as a "damper" on the program;
- partners do not understand what they should or could be evaluating;
- there are major differences between the way the program is described on paper and the program as it actually operates. These difference are not necessarily a "negative;" we know that programs evolve, grow and change as they develop. What was intended may not be feasible as the program is developed; for example, anticipated resources may not be available or may be insufficient to meet program needs. However, goals and objectives are often not updated to match changing needs and resources;

- partners see goal setting solely as a means to collect quantitative data that documents the program's process;
- schools and/or teachers "force fit" allocated resources to meet existing school, class and/or student goals and objectives. Just like fitting a "round peg into a square hole," partners must often match available, but inappropriate resources to established instructional objectives, or "add-on" the resources in the form of ancillary activities that are unrelated to the curriculum.
- partner and school goals differ and these differences, for some reason, are unreconcilable;
- goals and objectives are focused on "feel good" activities, lacking the necessary substance to address such issues as improved achievement and attendance, literacy, dropout reduction, school to work transitions and substance abuse intervention.

The range of experience and expertise in program assessment of the program leaders who responded to the survey was evident when they were asked to list a specific goal/or objective that had been successfully accomplished. Their responses indicated a clear understanding of behavioral objectives aimed at achieving substantive results. In addition, the survey tally of the kinds of overall program goals/objectives set by these leaders is clearly focused on the following areas (listed in order of frequency):

- enriching the instructional and cultural environment;
- positively motivating students and staff;
- improving student achievement;
- improving student behavior;
- preparing students for post-secondary education, training and employment;
- extending career awareness and specialized/vocational/job skills;
- providing human, material and financial resources;
- extending staff development;
- improving the school climate and environment;
- reducing dropout;
- improving school and community relations; and
- extending the collaboration of community and government agencies in support of schools.

G. ACTIVITIES CHOSEN TO ACHIEVE DEFINED OBJECTIVES

Activities that survey respondents choose to achieve program goals and objectives depends on the needs of the target population; program scope and area to be served; available resources; the defined goal and objective; the program's structure; and special parameters or limitations within which the individual program operates. Our tally of the activities most commonly implemented (listed in order of frequency) included:

- special awards and incentives;
- serving on education committees and task forces;
- workshops and conferences;

- curriculum development;
- staff development;
- speakers;
- field trips and tours;
- direct financial support;
- development of partnerships;
- donation of materials;
- use of company labs and facilities;
- career exploration;
- skills training classes;
- mentors;
- demonstrations and lectures;
- donation of equipment; and
- teacher recognition.

H. MEASURING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM "IMPACT"

The Logistics of the Evaluation Process

Over 90% of the programs surveyed included evaluation as an integral component since the programs were initiated. Evaluation is usually conducted by educators and their partners "in house." Independent evaluators are used to assist in program evaluation when specialized procedures, strategies and instruments are requested; when program leaders determine that evaluation expertise "in house" is insufficient to address evaluation plans; when partners agree that outside evaluation is necessary to document the success of program impact; and when sufficient financial resources are available and dedicated to program evaluation.

Evaluation is usually conducted both centrally and at field sites. Formative evaluation is used primarily for program monitoring purposes; summative evaluation is usually performed annually.

Planning and Organizing Program Evaluation

Survey results indicated that evaluation is developed like any other partnership program component. Joint planning and organization of evaluation usually includes all participating partners, although the partnership's leader has final, overall responsibility for program evaluation.

Educators appear traditionally to take the lead in the evaluation process, particularly in partnership programs that are based in a city's school district. It is interesting to note that in all but one of the case studies surveyed, parent and student representatives are minimally involved in this planning and organization. Nevertheless, program leaders specified that increased parent and student involvement was often an important goal or objective.

These program leaders set schedules for evaluation in a timely manner so that participants from all partner groups know what evaluations to expect and when to expect them. Leaders try to avoid "surprises" in this program area since evaluation is often perceived (particularly by educators) as a negative, bothersome intrusion. It appears that assessment is more accepted and the response rate is greater when:

- all partner groups participate in the planning and organization of the evaluation;

- the schedule for the preparation, distribution and collection of evaluation instruments is expected and known to all partners; and
- the evaluation instruments that are prepared are easy for respondents to complete.

Evaluation results are most usually reported to partner organizations, Boards of Education, superintendents of schools and partnership Advisory Councils. Other audiences who receive evaluation results include the media, the community-a-large and parents.

I. USING EVALUATION STRATEGIES AND INSTRUMENTS

In the programs surveyed, strategies used to collect information about program process and outcome appear to be straightforward and related integrally to ongoing program implementation. These strategies, like the instruments described below, are designed to support efficient and effective program management, program improvement, program expansion, and efficient allocation of available resources.

Instruments that are most frequently used to measure program process and outcomes include (in order of frequency): surveys; interviews; observations; teacher judgement; review of records (of grades, attendance, courses passed, suspensions, detentions, class cutting, tardiness, adult participation and attendance); meeting minutes; memos; and student self-evaluations. Samples of evaluation instruments, currently being used by program leaders, are included in the book.

Upon review of these instruments themselves and of the evaluation results collected from these instruments, it appears that the instruments achieve the purposes for which they were intended. They are used to support general program management, thereby serving as record-keeping tools. They also serve as formative monitoring tools to collect information for use in mid-point program adjustments of procedures, strategies and activities. Last, the instruments are designed to collect necessary information in a format that can be easily tallied and analyzed with a minimum waste of time and energy. In the majority of the programs surveyed, information is entered into computer systems, analyzed and then used as a basis for programmatic decision making.

J. DECISION MAKING BASED ON EVALUATION RESULTS

Program leaders use both formative and summative evaluation as the basis upon which to make decisions most frequently related to (listed in order of frequency):

- short and long-term planning;
- program refinement;
- program expansion;
- recognition and celebration of program success;
- institutionalization and replication of the program;
- documentation of long-term effects of the program on participants;
- review and redesign the delivery of instruction;
- eliciting new resources;

- strengthening community relations; and
- redesigning curriculum.

Evaluation is used less frequently for purposes of eliminating activities; determining the program's cost-effectiveness; eliciting advocacy support for the school and/or school district; restructuring/redesign of school structures and behaviors; review and redesign of classroom management of instruction; eliminating activities; and re-targeting youth and adult participant groups.

K. FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION

What We Know

Current collaborative programs differ in content and format: a) partners have a wide range of program goals and objectives; b) the program's scope can be local, state and/or national; c) target populations can include youths (preschool through grade 12) and/or adults (educators, students in post secondary training and education programs; parents and other partners; and d) programs can serve these populations in urban, suburban and rural areas.

Planning, organizing and implementing the evaluation of these non-traditional programs, no matter what procedures, strategies and instruments are used, is not an easy task. Partners continue to work 1) to create new means and/or 2) to refine and adapt existing evaluation procedures, strategies and tools to:

- more efficiently facilitate the logistics of program

evaluation;

- collect substantive process and outcome data about program impact;
- organize and analyze data for purposes of programmatic decision-making;
- recruit financial support for associated costs (if evaluations are multifaceted and use outside consultant services).
- address the sensitivities and conflicting expectations and pressures of partners:
 - a) who don't want the program evaluated or
 - b) who do want the program evaluated.

L. FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM EVALUATION

Partnerships in education are non-traditional, supplemental programs that currently (for example): enrich and support instruction; provide incentives and recognition for improvement in learner achievement, attitudes and behavior; assist and provide technical and management assistance to teachers, school administrators, schools and school districts; and lobby and advocate for school improvement efforts. The flurry of activity surrounding legislation, Business Roundtables (at state and national levels), national forums, symposia and task forces, speaks to the potential of partnership as a tool that could have even greater influence on school reform.

The fulfillment of such expectations rests on knowing what partnerships/alliances/collaboratives/public and private

interactions have thus far accomplished to support school improvement efforts. There is a real "need to know" about program processes and outcomes. The current "state of the art" of partnership program evaluation is at an elementary level. Leaders of the Partnerships in Education Movement are just beginning to use evaluation to collect the data necessary to make informed programmatic decisions beyond the restricted program area, class, school and district. These leaders come from the private and public sectors and participate in national networks formed under such groups as the National Association of Partners in Education (VA), the National Community Education Association (VA), The Triangle Coalition for Science and Technology Education (MD), Partnerships in Education Journal (FL), the National Alliance of Business (DC), Volunteer, The National Center (VA), and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (DC), just to name the major groups.

Over the next few years, these leaders will gain further experience as they evaluate the impact of their local, state and national programs. Even now, baseline data is being collected and entered into computer databases, for example, at local (Los Angeles) state (SC, FL) and national (National Association of Partners in Education) levels; these databases encourage ongoing sharing and exchange of current, exemplary evaluation procedures, practices and tools. With the assistance of this technology, partnership leaders from the private and public sectors can use evaluation to

strengthen and solidify the established networks. The collected data then establishes the base of support to encourage, facilitate and promote increasingly substantive and extensive school improvement through private and public sector collaboration.

Increased, more sophisticated evaluation at local, state and national levels will provide data that will form the basis upon which to make knowledgeable decisions about future action.